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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/361,655	07/27/1999	SE-JIN LEE	JHU1220-4	5790

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EXAMINER

MERTZ, PREMA MARIA

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1646

DATE MAILED: 08/12/2002

15

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.
09/361,655

Applicant(s)
Lee et al.

Examiner
Preme Mertz

Art Unit
1646



-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Jun 6, 2002
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 15, 18-22, and 44-46 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 15, 18-22, and 44-46 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
*See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). _____ 6) ☐ Other:

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DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-14, 16-17, 23-43 have been canceled previously. Claims 19-20, 22, amended claims 15, 18, 21, 44 and new claims 45-46 (Paper No. 14, 6/6/02), are under consideration.
2. Receipt of applicant's arguments and amendments filed in Paper No. 14 (6/6/02) is acknowledged.
3. The following previous rejections and objections are withdrawn:
 - (i) the rejection of claims 15, 18-22, 44 and 2-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, scope rejection; and
 - (ii) the rejection of claims 15, 18-22, 44 and 2-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, scope rejection.
4. Applicant's arguments filed in Paper No. 14 (6/6/02), have been fully considered and were persuasive. The new issues, are stated below.
5. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claim rejections-35 USC § 101

6. Claims 15, 18-22, 44-46 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility.

The instant application has provided a description of an isolated DNA encoding a GDF-12 protein, the GDF-12 protein encoded thereby, and antibodies to the protein. The instant application does not disclose the biological role of this protein or its significance.

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It is clear from the instant specification that the instant GDF-12 protein is what is termed an "orphan protein" in the art. This is a protein whose cDNA has been isolated because of its similarity to known proteins. There is little doubt that, after complete characterization, this protein as well as antibodies to this protein will probably be found to have a patentable utility. This further characterization, however, is part of the act of invention and until it has been undertaken, Applicants claimed invention is incomplete. The instant situation is directly analogous to that which was addressed in *Brenner v. Manson*, 148 U.S.P.Q. 689 (Sus. Ct, 1966), in which a novel compound which was structurally analogous to other compounds which were known to possess anti-cancer activity was alleged to be potentially useful as an antitumor agent in the absence of evidence supporting this utility. The court expressed the opinion that all chemical compounds are "useful" to the chemical arts when this term is given its broadest interpretation. However, the Court held that this broad interpretation was not the intended definition of "useful" as it appears in 35 U.S.C. § 101, which requires that an invention must have either an immediate obvious or fully disclosed "real world" utility. The Court held that:

"The basic quid pro quo contemplated by the Constitution and the Congress for granting a patent monopoly is the benefit derived by the public from an invention with substantial utility", "[u]nless and until a process is refined and developed to this point-where specific benefit exists in currently available form-there is insufficient justification for permitting an applicant to engross what may prove to be a broad field", and "a patent is not a hunting license", "[i]t is not a reward for the search, but compensation for its successful conclusion."

The instant claims are drawn to a method of detecting a liver cell sample comprising using an antibody to a GDF-12 protein of as yet undetermined function or biological significance. Applicants have disclosed a GDF-12 protein encoded by a nucleic acid molecule expressed in liver but not in

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ovary, muscle, testes, spleen, intestine, pancreas, seminal vesicle, kidney, brain, thymus, lung, and heart (Figure 1 and Example 2, page 27). However, the instant methods of detecting a liver cell (claim 15) and a method of detecting expression of GDF-12 cannot be useful for liver tissue identification and this is not a specific, substantial and credible utility that meets the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 101. All human proteins can invariably be classified into two categories, those which are expressed in a tissue or developmentally specific manner and those which are expressed ubiquitously. It can be alleged that any protein which is expressed in a tissue specific manner can be employed to detect the tissue in which it is expressed in a sample. Alternately, a human protein which is expressed ubiquitously can be employed to detect the presence of any human tissue in a sample. Such utilities are analogous to the assertion that a particular protein can be employed as a molecular weight marker, which is neither a specific or substantial utility.

One could just as readily argue that any purified compound having a known structure could be employed as an analytical standard in such processes as nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), infrared spectroscopy (IR), and mass spectroscopy as well as in polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE), high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and gas chromatography. None of these processes could be practiced without either calibration standards having known molecular structures or, at least, a range of molecular weight markers having known molecular weights. It was just such applications that the court appeared to be referring to when it expressed the opinion that all chemical compounds are "useful" to the chemical arts when this term is given its broadest interpretation (*Brenner v. Manson*, 148 U.S.P.Q. 689 (Sus. Ct, 1966)). Because the steroid compound which was

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the subject of that decision had a known structure and molecular weight it could have readily been employed as a molecular standard at that time. However, the court held that the compound at issue did not have a specific and substantial utility.

To grant Applicants a patent encompassing an isolated protein of as yet undetermined biological significance would be to grant Applicant a monopoly "the metes and bounds" of which "are not capable of precise delineation". That monopoly "may engross a vast, unknown, and perhaps unknowable area" and "confer power to block off whole areas of scientific development, without compensating benefit to the public" *Brenner v. Manson, Ibid*). To grant Applicant a patent on the method of detecting the GDF-12 polypeptide in a liver cell sample based solely upon an assertion that the protein is expressed in liver cells, is clearly prohibited by this judicial precedent since the compensation to the public is not commensurate with the monopoly granted.

Until some actual and specific significance can be attributed to the protein identified in the specification as GDF-12, the instant invention is incomplete. The GDF-12 protein is a compound which is known to be structurally analogous to proteins which are known in the art as the family of growth and differentiation factors. In the absence of a knowledge of the biological significance of this protein, there is no immediately obvious "patentable" use for it. To employ the GDF-12 protein of the instant invention as a diagnostic reagent, has been determined by the Courts to be a non-patentable utility. Since the instant specification does not disclose a "real world" use for the GDF-12 protein, then the claimed invention is incomplete and, therefore, does not meet the requirements of

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35 U.S.C. 101 as being useful. Furthermore, because the claimed invention is not supported by a specific asserted utility for the reasons set forth above, credibility cannot be ascertained.

Claims 15, 18-22, 44-46 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to adequately teach how to use the instant invention. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

Conclusion

No claim is allowed.

Advisory Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Prema Mertz whose telephone number is (703) 308-4229. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:00AM to 4:30PM (Eastern time).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Yvonne Eyler, can be reached on (703) 308-6564.

Official papers filed by fax should be directed to (703) 308-4227. Faxed draft or informal communications with the examiner should be directed to (703) 308-0294.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0196.

Prema Mertz
Prema Mertz Ph.D.
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1646
June 21, 2002